



JOSEPH R. BIDEN, III
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
820 NORTH FRENCH STREET
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19801

CONTACT JASON MILLER
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
PHONE (302) 577-8949
CELL (302) 893-8939
Jason.Miller@state.de.us

For Immediate Release: Monday, June 20, 2011
Contact: Joe Rogalsky/302-745-9299

Biden Addresses Leading Nationwide Crime Victims Organization Attorney General discusses efforts to give to 'give voice to the voiceless'

WASHINGTON, DC – Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden delivered the keynote address Monday at the National Center for Victims of Crime's annual conference. Speaking to victim advocates from across the United States, Biden -- who started the Delaware Department of Justice's Family Division in 2007 -- spoke of the never-ending duty to be there for those in need of help, how far the country has come and the challenges that remain in the years ahead.

"Whether you are a crisis counselor, a police officer, a member of the military or a trial attorney, you share the same mission – to give voice to the voiceless," Biden told the audience of more than 500 advocates. "I believe that is the central obstacle we face. An abused child often cannot speak. Those who can are often not heard. Those who are heard are sometimes not believed. And to add insult to injury, the person who finally hears the cry for help often hears it from someone they love, about someone they love."

During his tenure, Biden has undertaken numerous efforts to speak for those who too often cannot speak for themselves. He created the Department of Justice's Family Division to specialize in cases involving women and children, increased efforts to catch and punish child predators, launched the Senior Protection Initiative to protect the elderly and successfully pushed for stronger legal protections for survivors of domestic violence.

Remarks As Prepared For Delivery

Thank you. It is truly a privilege to address this group. Everyone in this room has made a choice on behalf of someone who wasn't given one – the choice to dedicate your work, your voice, and your life to victims of crime. That's not hyperbole – this is not work that you leave at the office. Thank you for your willingness to take on a fight that, sadly, never ends.

You come here today from a wide range of places, organizations, and perspectives. But whether you are a crisis counselor, a police officer, a member of the military or a trial attorney, you share the same mission – to give voice to the voiceless.

I believe that is the central obstacle we face.

An abused child often cannot speak. Those who can are often not heard. Those who are heard are sometimes not believed. And to add insult to injury, the person who finally hears the cry for help often hears it from someone they love, about someone they love.

This is at the core of child abuse, elder abuse, domestic violence and all that you've dedicated yourselves to.

Imagine having to make that choice. Witnesses to these crimes feel trapped by the decision to keep a “family matter” private, or expose people that they love as criminals. Breaking down that barrier is our challenge.

That is why I think you do what you do. It’s why our office and many of yours have restructured and refocused in order to reflect the interrelated nature of child abuse, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency and violent crime. When we created the Family Division in 2007, it was in direct response to the fact that abused & neglected children are forced onto a path that often ends in court, in prison, or worse. It was a reaction to scores of domestic violence victims who feel they cannot leave their abusers because they lack the financial resources to start over. It was an acknowledgment of the difficult reality that victims face every day – sometimes the people we love are the ones who cause the most harm.

The National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that well over half of crime committed in the United States each year is not reported to police. Sometimes, when dealing with minor property crimes for example, the reasons victims don’t report are relatively straightforward. But when it comes to violent crime, notably child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence, the reluctance to reach out for help is more complicated, and the need for a cultural shift is critical.

An integral part of victim advocacy is fighting the shame and stigma victims experience. That shame is magnified immeasurably when the crime occurs within a family. I believe, working together, we can and must change the culture and reach more victims with the right services.

We know very well that there is no single “community of victims.” They come from all walks of life, have been wronged in different ways, and heal along very personal paths. The help they need is as varied as they are. Thankfully, though, the help they can receive is as varied as you are. You effect real change because you have the creativity, the commitment, and most of all, the abiding conviction that anyone, no matter how deeply wounded, can rebuild their life.

As Frederick Douglass once said, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Thank you for allowing me to be here with you today, and thank you for making the choice to do what you do every day.